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Thomas A. O'Donoghue  
*Queensland University of Technology*

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## CLIO AND THE CURRICULUM: HISTORY AND THE TRUE PROFESSIONAL

Thomas A. O'Donoghue  
Queensland University of Technology

For many years the history of education had a prominent place as a subject in courses for the education and training of teachers. At least three major aspects are discernible in the history programmes in question: the ideas of the ideologues of the subject, the history of institutions nourishing them, and a narrative study of education systems with the focus on Acts and "Great Men". One of the foci in each case was the curriculum. By the late 1960s the subject was so firmly entrenched in courses that Simon (1969: 91) could argue as follows:

*There is no need to make a case for the study of the history of education as an essential aspect of the course offered to intending teachers. It has long been accepted as such in most colleges and universities and is almost universally taught in its own right as part of the education course.*

Within a few years, however, such an argument was no longer acceptable. Increasingly, it was being argued that just because something has been studied and taught for a long time does not mean that it should continue to be taught. The development of psychology and philosophy and their application to educational issues seemed to approximate more to the everyday concerns of teachers while sociology and comparative education seemed to offer more valid perspectives than history on the workings of educational institutions and systems. Midwinter's (1970: 3) observation at the time also demonstrates that the approach which educational historians were taking did not help their cause:

*Educational history is too often studied as a series of legislative enactments, with its students jumping from one Act of Parliament to the next, like mountain goats from peak to peak.*

The outcome was that it is now rare to find history of education, not to mention history of curriculum, being taught as a separate subject to student teachers. Indeed, thinking has changed to the extent of bringing about a situation where there is a tendency to dismiss all foundational subjects as being irrelevant to the student-teacher's future role.

The contemporary trend is towards what Stanley (1968: 228) back in the late 1960s termed "*the craft mentality*". Hitherto, the seeming order of priorities of teacher education courses put school experience at the bottom of the list. Now an equally unbalanced situation seemingly is emerging with the pressure to place school experience at the top of the list. Such is the pressure to limit work in professional education largely to student teaching or even apprentice teaching that a view is gaining ground that an adequate command of subject matter and the skills and techniques of teaching is all that matters. This is coupled to the assumption that the skills and techniques of teaching are readily identifiable and can be learned through apprenticeship. The implication is that all other basic problems of education are already solved or can be solved without the active participation of the classroom teacher in the continuing debate.

At the same time, the classroom teacher in Australia is increasingly returning to the university to engage in further education, particularly through attendance at courses leading to the M.Ed. degree. It is this area now which has the greatest potential for the promotion of the history of education and particularly the history of curriculum. New post-graduate programmes with curriculum specialisms are being developed and curriculum history constitutes one subject with a major contribution to make to the development of such a specialism as a serious area of academic pursuit. Furthermore, the potential quality of this contribution has been enhanced over the last fifteen years because of the "great file" (Goodson, 1985) of curriculum data produced through empirical studies. This, of course, is not to ignore Seddon's (1989: 2) contention that the research that has been done on the history of curriculum in Australia needs to be identified in non-curriculum sources and made more accessible to give a clearer picture of Australian curriculum history. Assuming, however, that the curriculum historians have risen to this challenge in the interim, what is now needed is an outline of the major areas in the history of curriculum appropriate for study particularly within a post-graduate degree course with a curriculum area of

specialism. During the 1960s and 1970s and, to a lesser extent, in the 1980s, this matter was tackled by focusing on individual areas and while the validity of the arguments which were put forward were largely above question, rarely was there an attempt to relate the arguments to each other and organise them into a comprehensive position. The remainder of this paper is offered as a starting point in the attempt which needs to be made to rectify the deficit

### 1. General Curriculum History

In order to introduce some necessary parameters into the field which constitutes the history of education it is useful to define the core of studies as consisting of "*the field of organised institutionalised education forms*" (Simon, 1969: 126). The history of curriculum is a sub-area of study within this field. The first element in a course in the history of curriculum should be a general examination of the basic issues in the history of curriculum within one's own state while taking cognisance of similarities and differences in developments in other states. While the focus at all times should be the curriculum, the relationship with the four other basic areas which are common to all educational work (Broudy, 1967: xii), namely, the aims of education, teaching, organisation and administration, and teacher education, cannot be neglected. Furthermore, consideration would have to be given to the broader environmental, social, economic and political context. In other words, the internal developments within the curriculum should be considered in their relationship to the wider world of physical and climatic conditions, population movements, technological changes, the structure of society, the economy and the philosophical and religious views of society. Specific issues can be highlighted by referring to case studies. Curriculum research within the domain of local history is becoming increasingly popular and is yielding a wealth of useful material for such a purpose. It is valuable also for illuminating an aspect of the history of curriculum which has been neglected for many years, namely, the fact that in many societies in the past there have been significant regional variations in terms of the nature and extent of curriculum provision even where government regulations did not allow for this to be the case.

A comparative perspective should also be adopted. As Marwick (1971: 146) puts it:

*The historian must always be on the look-out for elements of continuity, for illuminating parallels and comparisons drawn between one age and another and one country and another.*

This approach helps to broaden and deepen one's understanding of issues. It is within such a context that students can be introduced to the major curriculum views of significant thinkers and to curriculum developments in other societies. With careful preparation the tutor can establish points of contact between aspects of curriculum issues under consideration and the wider comparative world of curriculum thinkers and curriculum issues in other societies. The challenge is to be able to deviate where appropriate, enter the wider comparative world, present the fundamentals of the comparative points to be considered and return to the major focus of considerations, leaving the student sufficiently motivated to want to go and read wider about and around the comparative issue.

It is important, of course, to highlight for students that it is not because there might be any instrumental spin-offs that they are being encouraged to develop a sound grasp of the major issues in the history of curriculum. Rather, they are being encouraged to think historically about curriculum so that they will be more sensitised about their activities (King and Brownell, 1966: 157; Peters, 1969: 70). There is also the argument that if teachers are to be considered professionals then they should be capable of becoming involved not simply in teaching their specialities but "*in the planning and determination of the total programme of the school - indeed of the total educational programme of the nation*" (Stanley, 1968: 230). In order to be able to fulfil such a role, however, the teacher must be able to consider educational problems within a framework which identifies "*the relationship of the school to the social order, and the aims, the organisation and the curriculum of the school in a particular society*" (Stanley, 1968: 230). It is arguable that curriculum history has a major role to play in this respect since it gives educationalists a cognitive map which allows them to locate a problem within some set of meanings. It can also, as Simon (1969: 126) points out:

*...take the student into areas far removed from the classroom and encourage concern with wider fields of knowledge which should be the mark of the teacher.*

Sutherland (1985, 226) contends that a lack of conditioning in this kind of reflective thinking about the curriculum is seriously lacking amongst teachers and is compounded by the following situation:

*....there seems little impetus to serious consideration of central and general aims....fashions succeed each other, and teachers - theirs not to reason why - are expected to change content and methods of their work in due conformity following and climbing on each successive band-wagon as it comes along.*

A study of the history of curriculum can help to rectify this deficit. It develops a way of thinking which allows one to gain a perspective on curriculum problems. This is to accept Broudy's (1967: 1) case for an "interpretive use of knowledge"; a use that enables one to conceptualise and understand an existential problem without necessarily allowing one to solve it.

## 2. An Introduction to Historiography

In the teaching of any aspect of the history of curriculum it is important that an open-ended approach be adopted. The incompleteness of research should be stressed, gaps in knowledge should be outlined and new historical questions should be posed. There should be opposition to suggestions that there exists one correct version of past events. As Rogers (1984: 21) has put it:

*History deals largely with matters that are essentially contested and to look for unanimity among historical accounts is simply to misunderstand the nature of historical knowledge. But to repudiate "one right version" as a feasible objective gives no sanction whatever to the polemical and uninformed accounts of the past....What is at stake is the sort of ground for a valid knowledge claim.*

It is arguable that students who have not majored in history could hardly appreciate fully the need to repudiate "one right version" of any aspect of the history of curriculum without receiving an introduction to historiography. While ideally such an introduction would deal with a variety of issues, it is likely that pressure of time would not allow for any more than a basic course in the nature and methodology of history. A course of this type would constitute the second element of a programme in the history of curriculum.

A basic course in the nature and methodology of the history of curriculum would have a number of features. First of all, it would consist of an introduction to basic ideas associated with primary and secondary sources, a hierarchy of sources and the authenticity and reliability of sources. The associated concepts can best be learned through consulting various curriculum documents including legislation, school programmes, official letters, reports and recommendations of commissions of inquiry, biographies, diaries, political speeches, minutes, newspaper extracts and textbooks. Such a consultation should also be used to encourage students to ask their own questions; to see that not only is evidence created by questions but questions are, in turn, generated by evidence; and to see that there are no determinate rules for asking questions and so no possibility of simply working mechanically through prescribed texts in using evidence.

Secondly, students can be given an introduction to the major archives which exist, the standard bibliographies and catalogues for locating sources, and the major local, national and international journals publishing scholarly articles in the history of curriculum. Thirdly students should engage in a piece of private research on a curriculum area chosen by themselves in consultation with their lecturer. Finally, students should be made aware of some of the major areas of on-going research in the field.

## 3. A Study of the Historical Dimensions of a Number of Current Curriculum Issues

It is arguable that by introducing students both to the major trends in the history of curriculum in their own state within the context of national trends and to historiography that they will develop a necessary historical framework within which contemporary curriculum issues can be located. The importance of such a framework should not be underestimated. History has a crucial role to play because it is hardly possible to understand a present-day curriculum issue without a sound knowledge of its background development. As Marwick (1971: 18) puts it in relation to history in general:

*....a full understanding of human behaviour in the past makes it possible to find familiar elements in present problems and makes it possible to solve them more intelligently.*

In the same way, "any reflection on the present time, any attempt to analyse a current educational situation, implies some reference to the past" (Simon, 1969: 65).

Arising from considerations so far it is arguable that the third element of a course in the history of curriculum should consist of a study of the historical dimension of a series of current curriculum issues. The objective is not to present the student with a historical background to all contemporary issues of an international, national or regional dimension in the realm of curriculum. Rather, by focusing on a number of issues the student should eventually become sensitised to both the need for, and the usefulness of placing contemporary issues in their historical context as well as become conditioned to asking historical questions about each issue. Such an exercise should also facilitate the development within students of a detector system which enables them "to pierce smoke-screens and refute false information regarding some event in the past" (Leon, 1985: 100). In the contemporary curriculum debate there is always the possibility that in the absence of an appropriate historical background the past may be misused, raided, distorted or condemned. Ravitch (1974: xi), for example, has pointed to the tendency in American educational history up to the late 1960s to ignore injustice to minorities and to distort the past in order to present:

*....one-sided, over idealised histories which viewed the development of American education as an unfolding series of triumphs, symbolising the victory of democracy and modernity over aristocracy and error.*

Also, as Wardle (1970: viii) points out, there must be in any historical judgement and element of interpretation and "this is affected by the assumptions which the reader brings to the process." Studying the history of curriculum helps students to question their own assumptions as well as those which influenced curriculum decisions in the past.

While the historical dimension to contemporary issues can be dealt with in a series of lectures, students can also be encouraged in seminar-style tutorials to discuss the issues and to identify other issues for investigation. With respect to the latter, they should be encouraged to draw upon their own school experiences (Rutschky, 1983: 499-517), their teaching experiences and their knowledge of contemporary developments in order to identify areas for discussion and study. Furthermore, they should write short essays on these areas and discuss them in their tutorials.

## 4. Case Studies

The seminar-style tutorial also provides a suitable setting for dealing with the fourth and final element of a course in the history of curriculum, namely, a consideration of a variety of case-studies as "resources for suggestion and creativity latent in the educational thought and practice of other times or other lands" (Stanley, 1968: 233). Leon (1985: 102), in dealing with the same point, argues that former practices can be the subject of critical analysis aimed at identifying mistakes to be avoided in future or to keep educational fashions in perspective. He argues that this approach can lead to a better understanding of the degree of uncertainty which surrounds the development of any action. A study of former practices can also be useful in heightening one's awareness of the need to be alert to the gap which often exists between what is said and what is achieved in educational matters. At the same time, however, "it can remind us that the change is humanly possible given the will and the opportunity for change" (Charlton, 1968: 75). The tutor, of course, will bring to the attention of students that to go beyond this perspective and to attempt to build theory and principles of practice from one's historical studies would bring one beyond the history of curriculum into the world of curriculum design, development, innovation and implementation.

At the same time, it is heartening to observe that educational theorists, and curriculum theorists in particular, are increasingly taking cognisance of the historical perspective. To a certain extent this development has grown out of a disenchantment with the view of the early 1960s that the problem of curriculum change was largely a technical one, requiring good management and planning. The assumption was that new ideas competently produced and thoroughly implemented would succeed in overhauling school curricula very quickly. Experience, however, proved otherwise and, as Marsden (1979) has demonstrated, has shown:

*....that sophisticated theoretical frameworks are not enough, and have shifted the emphasis to the constraints imposed by economic and political factors....the conflict of personality and group interest.*

Others, including Taylor (1979: 117) and Lawn and Barton (1981: 14) have stressed the need to consider historical and contextual factors while Lawton (1980: 306) has argued that it is difficult, if

not impossible to discuss curriculum issues in a meaningful way without looking at them in a social, cultural and historical context.

## CONCLUSION

An attempt has been made in this paper to outline the major areas of study in the history of curriculum appropriate especially for students involved in post-graduate programmes like the M.Ed. It has been argued that there are four major areas of study, namely, a general study of the basic issues in the history of curriculum in one's own State, a basic course in the nature and methodology of history with particular reference to the history of curriculum, a study of the historical dimension of a selection of current curriculum issues, and a consideration of a variety of case studies as resources for suggestion and creativity latent in the thoughts and practices of other times and other lands. It is to be hoped that the major issues which have been raised will provide food for thought and discussion amongst those who are responsible for constructing courses in curriculum studies and provide directions for those with particular responsibility for the history of curriculum within such course

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## BOOK REVUES

University effectively limited any attempt to establish alternate parameters of a worthwhile education.

Chapter three traces some of the early pressures to reform the public examination system. Under the influence of broader economic, political and social changes pressure to broaden the range of examination courses mounted. Melbourne University came under increasing pressure to offer a curriculum more relevant to the contemporary world. Thus in the 1890s utilitarianism became increasingly influential as the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie demanded courses in engineering, agriculture, forestry and the sciences.

Chapter four charts the move toward 'adaptation and modernity' in the period 1905 to 1916. In the first decade of the twentieth century Federation, industrial growth, economic prosperity and social mobility created a mood of optimism in Australia. After Federation there was a general consensus between the ruling elite and working class about the desirability of social peace. In this context schools adapted their curriculum to the modern era and moved in an utilitarian direction. At this moment the Education Department started to mediate in the debate over the role of secondary education and public examinations.

Chapter five examines the role of Theodore Fink and Frank Tate in engineering the establishment of the Schools Board in place of the Board of Public Examinations. In the context of Musgrave's argument, the balance of power shifted to the self interest of the industrial bourgeoisie under the impact of technological progress. Reformers like Tate and Fink were able to affirm the values of national efficiency to appeal to the ruling elite.

In chapter six Musgrave explains how Melbourne University's desire for a distinct university entry examination allowed the Professorial Board "to reclaim the function of policing the standards of matriculation while allowing the School Board to run the Leaving Certificate" (p.256).

This book examines the manner in which the University of Melbourne "created, maintained and controlled the system of public examinations" (1992, p.5) in Victoria from 1856 to 1964. Musgrave's major contention is that the debate over public examinations reflected a broader ideological struggle between the humanitarian and utilitarian traditions of education. He emphasises the role of public opinion in influencing the education system to respond to the realities of changing economic and political circumstances. In the process, he accentuates the hegemonic influence of the university's examinations on the whole education system of Victoria.

The book operates at three distinct levels. It sets out to explain the relationship between social structure and human agency. As a consequence, Musgrave devotes considerable space to the historical, economic and political context of the public examination debate. Within these broader constraints, he explains the manner in which various interest groups struggled to control the nature, content and process of education. Finally, at the school level, he examines the implications of the broader ideological struggle in relation to the organisation of the school curriculum in the private and public school systems.

Chapter one briefly outlines the major conceptual ideas that illuminate the book. Musgrave alludes to some important theoretical ideas to order his data and expose the interests that stimulated public examination reforms in Victoria between 1856 and 1964. The ideas of structure and culture provide the major 'organising principles' for this rather ambitious task.

Chapter two analyses the early power struggle between the proponents of the classics and the modern subjects. Musgrave demonstrates that in the period 1856 to 1880 the governing elite sought to impose a particular set of cultural arrangements on the Victorian education system. From the beginning, a strong relationship between the elite private schools and Melbourne